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DEPARTMENT FOR PA, NEA/ARN, INR/IC/CD, INR/S:STHIBEAULT AND
JMCCARTER, VOA NEWS CA, NEA/PPD:CBOURGEOIS, DBENZE AND
AFERNANDEZ, IIP/G/NEA-SA RWINCHESTER
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SUBJECT: Damascus Media Reaction: Arab Summit, Lebanon, Iraq,
Syria/PLO (3/28)

11. Summary: Syrian papers focused on the 18th Arab summit that will be inaugurated in Khartoum today. All papers reported President Asad's arrival in Khartoum to participate in the summit and featured photos of his meetings with Sudanese President Al-Bashir, Lebanese President Lahoud and Emir Sabah al-Ahmad al-Jaber al-Sabah of Kuwait.

Papers also reported meetings held by Foreign Minister Walid al-Mouallem in Khartoum on the sidelines of the summit with Cypriot Foreign Minister George Iacovou and with his Cuban counterpart Felipe Perz Roque.

Papers also cited a statement by Lebanese Ex-Premier Salim al-Hoss to the Sudanese News Agency [SUNA] calling upon the Arab Summit to support Syria politically and economically to face US and Israeli pressure on Syria. Al-Hoss indicated that "a Zionist and imperialist project to dismantle the Arab world has started in Iraq," that "the U.S. is practicing terrorism in the world," that "it is against democracy," and that "its rejection of the results of the Palestinian elections is clear evidence."

Papers also reported Minister of information Dr. Mohsen Bilal's meeting with Farouk Qaddoumi, Head of the PLO Political Department, which focused on bilateral relations, the situation in the region and developments in the occupied Palestinian territories.

End of summary.

12. Selected Headlines:

"President Asad discusses with his Lebanese counterpart Emile Lahoud and Sheikh Sabah al-Ahmad, the Emir of Kuwait, latest developments in the region and issues on the agenda of the summit" (Government-owned Tishreen, 3/28)

"Foreign Minister al-Muallem: All are waiting for important decisions; we notice an increasing awareness of the dangers created by challenges" (Government-owned Tishreen, 3/28)

"Dr. Mohsen Bilal [Minister of Information]: Syria works hard to

make the Arab summit a success" (Government-owned Al-Ba'th, 3/28)

"Information Minister Dr. Bilal reviews with Farouk Qaddoumi, Chairman of the PLO Political Department, the latest developments and receives German Ambassador in Damascus" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 3/28)

"Former Lebanese Prime Minister al-Hoss calls on the Arab summit to support Syria in the face of American and Israeli pressure" (Government-owned Tishreen, 3/28)

"Over 40 Iraqis killed, 30 injured in an attack on an American station in Mosel" (Government-owned Tishreen 3/28)

"The final sessions of the Lebanese national dialogue postponed until Monday. Lebanese President Lahoud: Syria is being pressured because of its national stances. Leaders of the Lebanese Democratic Party, Arsalan, and the Unionist Party, Murad: Israel is the only enemy for Lebanon" (Government-owned Tishreen, 3/28)

13. Editorial Block Quotes:

"The Khartoum Summit, Desired Goals"

An unsigned editorial in government-owned Al-Ba'th on (3/28) read: "Arab leaders meet in their Khartoum summit amid extremely serious and complicated circumstances and challenges...."

"We might not be exaggerating if we say that the Arab leaders never met while the Arab situation was as bad as it is today,

when dangers and disasters threaten all Arabs. Those who believe they are outside the circle of danger or claim they are not targeted by the pressure or will be safe from it in the future are wrong. The Arab nation can confront these challenges and dangers only through common Arab action and solidarity. Arab countries are not required to mobilize their armies and go to war, but they should not deal with developments, plans, and the policies of the superpowers as if they were fate. They should deal with them using the logic that takes into consideration national interests and legitimate rights of Arabs as guaranteed by international laws and conventions."

"The Preliminary Results of the Lebanese Dialogue: Victory for the Resistance Policy and Relationship with Syria, a Blow to the Plot of 1559"

Hasan Hardan, a commentator in government-owned Tishreen, commented (3/28): "Meetings of the Lebanese dialogue that were held in the parliament produced important results in every sense of the word...."

"The recognition of Lebanon's ownership of Shebaa Farms constitutes a retreat for the 14 February team, led by Druze member of parliament Walid Jumblatt. Jumblatt had cast doubt on Lebanon's ownership of the farms and sought to align himself with the US-French demand to strip the resistance of legitimacy and disarm it, on the ground that no more Lebanese land is occupied. This recognition also constituted a victory for the policy of resistance...."

"On the other hand, this recognition is a painful blow to the US-French alliance and, behind it, Israel. It brings down one of the most important provisions of Resolution 1559, that aims to disarm the resistance...."

"The assertion of the need to establish outstanding relations with Syria is a clear sign of a reversal of the stand that was taken by the 14 February team...."

"Regardless of whether this shift in the stand of the 14 February team was a result of a change in the domestic, regional and world equation, failure to bring the coup in Lebanon to a conclusion, or pressure by leading economic figures and popular sectors that suffered huge damage as a result of the provocative racist campaign against Syria, the shift is a victory for the policy of distinguished relations between Syria and Lebanon....

"It also shows that the resistance, which liberated most of the occupied Lebanese territories in the absence of unanimity among the Lebanese, is now drawing closer to achieving consensus on continuation of its efforts to liberate the remaining occupied land and prisoners who are held in the jails of the occupation authorities.

"This near consensus will necessarily trouble the United States and Israel a great deal. Both the United States and Israel had expected Resolution 1559 to trigger conflict in Lebanon. However, they reaped contrary results, in the form of rallying around the legitimacy of the resistance more than ever before. The collective recognition of Lebanon's ownership of Shebaa Farms represents the groundwork for this legitimacy."

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